NOTICE OF DR. ROBERT BRIDGES.

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Amidst the great population of the city, the Academy is comparatively a very small body; in fact, a mere company addicted to studies in which our fellow-citizens generally take not much interest; so little, indeed, that they hardly care to understand the nature of the work done in the institution, or to appreciate its value to the community.

General literature, the drama, music, the fine arts, attract and divert the people so satisfactorily that belles-lettres writers, poets, painters and sculptors who are skilful, are almost universally admired, and become celebrated widely and attain a higher position in public estimation than unobtrusive votaries of science, whose real worth is rightly appreciated solely by the few. Only pre-eminently great scientists and naturalists acquire position among the hosts of men distinguished because they have aided in some way the progress of civilization. The merits of individuals of the rank and file, whose labors contribute largely to the success and fame of the leaders, are too frequently overlooked.

The Natural Sciences occupy a boundless field. Its cultivation is endless, and, when a society undertakes it, requires laborers of almost every variety of qualification and degree of intelligence. Properly mounting, labeling, classifying specimens in the museum, and cataloguing and arranging books in the library for ready reference may be done by persons not qualified to recognize or describe new species; yet this comparatively inferior kind of work is of much value in facilitating the labors of those engaged in other parts of the field. The discovery and definition of new genera and species, though of very great importance, are not the sole objects of the society's pursuit. Successful generalization demands a different kind of intelligence and more extensive acquirements than special description of forms.

A good name properly earned by an individual in any department of our little community is in itself a contribution to the fair reputation of the Academy; and this is worth consideration, because the good name of the institution carries with it an influence which is important to its progress and prosperity. A good

name, therefore, is among the valuables of the corporation, to be transmitted to future members, as a common inheritance. One who contributes towards the advancement of science, either directly or indirectly; who leaves the Academy in better condition because he has passed part of his life in it, is surely worthy of remembrance. Whenever one dies who has attained distinction within our little world, through his services to the common cause, a suitable record of his worth should be made, that his successors may know to whom they are indebted and be reasonably grateful. There have been and there are now members, who, on account of their contributions towards the advancement of science and the progress of the society, are entitled to more than ordinary respect—men whose conduct is worthy of admiration and imitation, at least by all those who have like scientific tastes and tendencies.

The records of the society show that among these Dr. Robert Bridges held a prominent place. A sketch of his career in the Academy only is offered here.

He was born in Philadelphia, March 5, 1806, and died in this city, February 20, 1882, at the age of very nearly seventy-six years.

Dr. Robert Bridges was elected a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, January, 1835.

His first work was an *Index of the Genera in the Herbarium*, prepared by him and Dr. Paul B. Goddard, which he presented to the Academy, August, 1835.

He was elected Librarian, June 28, 1836, and served till May 28, 1839—two years and eleven months—when he resigned. He assisted in preparing and printing the first catalogue of the library. The Academy presented its thanks to him for "the able and efficient discharge of the duties of librarian."

In the course of the years 1839–40, he served as Recording Secretary *pro tempore*, during five months.

He was elected Corresponding Secretary, May, 1840, and served till December, 1841, one year and seven months.

He was a Vice-President from September, 1850—succeeding Dr. R. Eglesfield Griffith, who died June 26—till December, 1864, fourteen years and three months, when he was chosen President. He declined re-election, December, 1865.

He was an Auditor six years, from December, 1843, till December, 1849.

He was a member of the *Publication Committee* from December, 1837, till December, 1838; and again from December, 1849, till December, 1872, when he declined re-election, having served twenty-three years. He was chairman of the committee from December, 1865, till December, 1872.

He was a member of the *Library Committee* twenty-nine years, from December, 1842, till December, 1871, and chairman of it from December, 1846, till December, 1853.

He was a member of the *Committee on Proceedings* seven years, from January, 1862, till January, 1869; and of the *Finance Committee* five years, from December, 1869, till December, 1874.

He was elected a member of the *Botanical Committee*, January, 1836, was chairman of it from December, 1846, and served till December, 1857, twenty-one years, when he declined re-election. For his official services the Academy voted him its thanks, December 28, 1841. On the 23d of May, 1843, he presented a *New Index of the Herbarium*, and one of *Menke's Herbarium*, from the Committee, a work which was long the main guide to the botanical collections.

He was elected a member of the *Committee on Entomology and Crustaca*, January, 1849, became chairman of it January, 1858, and served till December, 1865, seventeen years. He labeled, catalogued and arranged anew the collection of Crustaca according to the nomenclature and classification accepted at that time as the best.

He was nine years a member of the *Committee on Herpetology and Ichthyology*, from January, 1857, till January, 1866, and was chairman of it from January, 1860.

He was elected, January, 1866, a member of the *Committee on Physics;* became chairman of it, January, 1868, and served till May, 1876, ten years and four months.

He was a member of the *Committee on Chemistry* five years and four months, from December, 1870, till May, 1876, when all the standing committees were abolished.

Under the By-Laws adopted May 25, 1869, a Council was created. Dr. Bridges was elected a Councillor, December 28, 1869, and served till May, 1876, six years and four months.

A committee was raised, June 30, 1846, to devise means of accommodating the Due de Rivoli's collection of birds, which had been just purchased by Dr. Thomas B. Wilson. Dr. Bridges was

appointed a member of the committee, which reported, August 4th, a plan for extending the building thirty feet westward. The report was adopted, and the committee, then made the Building Committee, was instructed to execute the plan.

Again, December 30, 1851, Dr. Bridges was appointed a member of a committee to solicit subscriptions to enlarge and improve the hall. The committee reported, January 25, 1853, that the estimated sum required had been subscribed. Dr. Thomas B. Wilson, Dr. Robert Bridges and Mr. Wm. S. Vaux were appointed a Building Committee to execute the plans of improvement. In behalf of the committee, Mr. Vaux reported, December, 1855, that the work of raising the previously enlarged building twenty-four feet had been completed at a cost of $12,263, which had been paid.

Dr. Bridges was appointed, December 26, 1865, one of a Committee of forty members to solicit subscriptions to erect a fireproof building for the use of the Academy, and he was elected, January 8, 1867, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Building Fund, and by it, January 11, 1867, a member of the Building Committee, in which he was active till the society was established in its new hall, January, 1876.

Besides serving the society as Librarian, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Auditor, Vice-President and President, member of numerous Standing Committees, as well as of very many Special Committees, he contributed to its funds, to its library and to its museum. In all the many years of his activity he was rarely absent from the meetings of the Academy, and discharged all duties imposed upon him promptly and efficiently.

His numerous official services, presented here in summary, imply that he had the kindly respect and confidence of his fellow-members; and it may be said that the record of his labors expresses all the eulogium required. Almost all his time not occupied by his professional avocations was employed, during more than forty years, in working faithfully, disinterestedly, to promote the acquirement and diffusion of knowledge of natural history which are the chief purposes of the society. He was remarkably courteous to students, and always seemed pleased to assist them in their inquiries and pursuits. His learning was varied and extensive and minutely accurate, but he was so modest, unassuming, that it was necessary to apply to him for information to perceive the

wealth of knowledge at his command. He was an expert chemist, a good botanist, and well versed in almost all the natural sciences; yet he published little, and seldom engaged in debate. But his good sense and independent judgment, his rigid probity and loyalty to truth in every aspect, his punctual faithfulness to all obligations, his cheerful and benevolent disposition and tranquil deportment at all times, combined to render his presence in the society a beneficial influence on its progress, an influence which cannot be made manifest by instances or definitely measured.

His interest in the Academy was unremitting till the close of his life. After impaired health prevented him from being active in its affairs and from being present at the meetings, he often found recreation during the day in passing hours reading in the library.

The Academy has had among its members many distinguished, and some wealthy and beneficent friends, but none more constant, none who has worked more industriously and efficiently for its advancement than Dr. Robert Bridges. His givings to it were as generous as his comparatively narrow circumstances justly allowed. No striking invention, no discovery in science is ascribed to him, but laboriousness, sincerity of purpose and faithfulness were so manifest in all his ways that he had the confidence of all. He earned for himself a good name in the society, and is entitled to be long remembered among us, kindly and respectfully.